

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A depthometer for measuring a length of an elongate line, said depthometer comprising:
 - a main body component;
 - a main wheel connected to said main body component;
 - a registering mechanism in communication with said main wheel;
 - a lower body component; and

10 means for automatically moving said main body component towards said lower body component to engage a line.

2. The depthometer of claim 1 wherein said means for automatically moving said main body component towards said lower body component to engage a line comprises at least one device selected from the group consisting of springs, hydraulic devices, and air-driven devices.

15 3. The depthometer of claim 1 further comprising a line guide connected to said lower body component.

20 4. The depthometer of claim 3 wherein said line guide comprises a wheel.

5. The depthometer of claim 1 further comprising a handle for displacing said main body component from said lower body component.

25 6. The depthometer of claim 5 wherein said handle comprises:
 - an inner handle; and
 - an outer handle.

7. The depthometer of claim 6 wherein said inner handle is connected to said main body component.

5 8. The depthometer of claim 6 wherein said outer handle is connected to said lower body component.

9. A method of measuring a length of an elongate line, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a depthometer having a registering mechanism;
10 displacing a first body component from a second body component;
positioning a line adjacent a wheel; and
automatically moving the first body component towards the second body component to engage the line.

15 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the step of displacing a first body component from a second body component comprises pulling a first body component away from a second body component.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the step of displacing a first body component from a 20 second body component comprises squeezing a first handle towards a second handle.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the step of displacing a first body component from a second body component comprises compressing a spring.

25 13. The method of claim 9 wherein the step of positioning a line adjacent a wheel comprises positioning a line between a wheel mounted upon the first body component and a line guide mounted upon the second body component.

14. The method of claim 9 wherein the step of automatically moving the first body component towards the second body component to engage the line comprises forcing the first body component towards the second body component with a spring-like force to engage the line.

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15. The method of claim 14 wherein the step of forcing the first body component towards the second body component with a spring-like force to engage the line comprises allowing a compressed spring to expand.

10 16. A depthometer for measuring a length of an elongate line, said depthometer comprising:
a wheel for contacting an elongate line;
means for creating a spring-like force against the line to maintain frictional contact between the line and said wheel; and
means for registering a length.

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17. The depthometer of claim 16 wherein said means for creating a spring-like force comprises a spring.

18. The depthometer of claim 16 further comprising means for mounting said wheel.

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19. The depthometer of claim 18 wherein said means for mounting said wheel comprises a main body component.

20. The depthometer of claim 19 further comprising a line guide.

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21. The depthometer of claim 20 further comprising a lower body component, said line guide mounted upon said lower body component.

22. The depthometer of claim 21 wherein said means for creating a spring-like force is positioned on the depthometer to move said main body component towards said lower body component.

5 23. The depthometer of claim 21 further comprising means for grasping the depthometer.

24. The depthometer of claim 23 wherein said means for grasping the depthometer comprises at least one handle.

10 25. The depthometer of claim 24 wherein said at least one handle comprises:
an outer handle; and
an inner handle.

26. The depthometer of claim 25 wherein said outer handle slidably engages said main body
15 component.

27. The depthometer of claim 25 wherein said outer handle connects to said lower body component.

20 28. The depthometer of claim 25 wherein said inner handle connects to said main body component.

29. The depthometer of claim 25 wherein said outer handle comprises:
at least one shaft connected to said lower body component; and
25 a transverse portion connected to said at least one shaft.

30. The depthometer of claim 29 wherein said means for creating a spring-like force comprises a spring inserted over said shaft of said outer handle.